

DANIEL F. WATERS GERMANTOWN DYE WORKS,
BUILDING C
37-55 East Wister Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-213-C

HAER
51-PHILA,
716C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

DANIEL F. WATERS GERMANTOWN DYE WORKS, BUILDING C

Location:

HAER No. PA-213-C

37-55 E. Wister Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation
48 East Penn Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144

Present Occupant:

Vacant.

Significance:

Building C served originally as William Mills' dyehouse. Although Building C is not Mills' original dyehouse, its large scale represents the growth and prosperity of the dye works in the 1870s.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Date(s) of Erection:

Building C was erected in 1875 (Hexamer 1878).

Architect:

Unknown.

Original/Subsequent Owners:

See Chain of Title.

Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Unknown.

Original Plans/Construction:

Built in 1875, Building C measures 40' x 130'. The one-story brick building originally had a slate roof. The linear structure is 13 bays long and 4 bays wide, and extensive wood truss work supports the roof. A monitor extending the length of the building was part of the original design. According to the 1875 Hexamer Survey, two interior iron water tanks were located in the south end of Building C.

Alterations/Additions:

Since 1875, as the dye works expanded, later buildings covered Building C's north, south, and west elevations. The east elevation remains as Building C's only exposed original elevation. However, it is uncertain whether the entire fabric of the original 1875 structure remains. Building permit research has revealed numerous alterations to GDW's dye houses over the years. The permits do not specify which dyehouse is being worked upon, and the number of dye houses has not always been limited to Building C. Buildings D, E, and F were also dye houses, and the permit information may be referring to these structures. Work detailed in the permits ranges from roof repairs and structural reinforcement to one instance in 1912 where a new roof, brickwork, and frame was needed as a result of a fire.

B. Historical Context

Building C was erected during a period of growth for William Mills and reflects his early success. The building has always housed the dyeing process and is the largest building at the Germantown Dye Works.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Architectural Character:

Building C contributes to the industrial architectural vocabulary evident at the Germantown Dye Works. It reflects the comparatively small-scale, one and two-story, brick structures typical to this complex.

Condition of Fabric:

The structure is in generally fair condition. A water pipe extends across the cartway and enters Building A. The east elevation brickwork is sound.

B. Description of Exterior

Overall Dimensions:

40' x 13', 1-story

Foundations:

Masonry.

Walls:

Material: brick, running bond.

Thickness: thirteen-inch walls, according to 1875 Hexamer Survey.

Structural System/Framing:

Wood truss system on brick piers.

Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:

Not applicable.

Chimneys:

The original structure did not have chimneys. A c.1920 rendering of the Germantown Dye Works, then owned by D. F. Waters and Sons, depicts eight chimneys protruding west of the monitor. As a whole, the rendering contains dubious information, it appears as if artistic license was used to portray the dye

works as a larger and more prominent establishment. As such, the present state of chimneys atop Building C is not available.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

Double-leaf vertical board doors on rolling tracks open onto the cartway.

Windows/Shutters:

The east elevation contains 8/8 double-hung sash windows that have been boarded-up. They have wooden lintels and brick sills.

Roof:

The gable roof has a monitor, with its own gable, extending the length of Building C. Originally, Building C had a brick cornice and four lightning rods on the roof.

C. Description of Interior

Floor Plans:

The floor plan of Building C consists of a long, open factory space. Sections off of the center aisle are recessed in the floor and once contained mechanical equipment used for dyeing (vats). The height of Building C in 1875 was 10' at the exterior walls and 18' at the monitor.

Stairways:

Not applicable.

Flooring:

Concrete, originally contained 2" wooden planks.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Ceiling is exposed timber truss work. Walls are exposed brick.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

Rolling metal fire-door separates Building C from Building D. Building C internally accessible from Buildings D, E, and G.

Windows:

Simple wood surrounds.

Decorative Features and Trim:

Not applicable.

Hardware:

Modern hardware throughout.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

When erected, C was warmed by 1" wrought iron steam pipe resting on iron.

Lighting:

When erected, C was lighted by gas. Presently has modern electrical fixtures throughout.

Plumbing:

Modern piping evident in dye house washroom.

D. Site

General Setting/Orientation:

Building C is situated in the center of the Germantown Dye Works. Accessible from the exterior via the cartway, the east elevation presents a long, one-story facade. On the interior, Building C communicates with Buildings D, E, and G. The 14'-wide, brick-laid cartway separates Building C's east elevation from Buildings H, I, and J.

Historic Landscape Design:

The general water well for the Germantown Dye Works site was located in the cartway between Building C and Building I.

Outbuildings:

None.